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A SONNET THAT EXPLODED

1.

I wonder of the cool of it
the transform in the rigging
lets the wind speak consonants
at last, that great Voweller
brought to our dumb school
at last, at last
someone else is talking.
What say you, breeze marine?
Have all the old packboats
finally let you come home
and new books to be read? Alas,
not likely. The new books
have the same words as the old.
The ship we are
has no rudder of return.
Alas again we have to stay
in the same story, it seems,
the seeming itself until
we hear the surf at last
crashing on the other shore
and then, and then
we slip between the reefs
to the glad island of nobody home.

2.

All you conquistadors
I know you know,
it wasn't for those famous G's
that sent you out
— God called glory girls—
it was the quest for a desert place
a dear final land
with nobody in it,
you wanted a place
outside the system,
a voyage from samsara
to all the other thing,
the genuine West.

3.

And there the words would all asleeping.
And you could change the names of things,
walk right out of your story
leave your beliefs behind
walk into the actual light. And you too
could be a seed of something else,
be planted there and grow,
or else be a soul again and come back
to lead new mariners to those shores
in new caravels and steamships and submarines –
to flee from this into this,

**come ashore on this
actual moment
washed clean,
still the taste of salt
on your skin. Our salt.**

8 September 2013

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Hearing someone speaking you hear
words beneath the words the person says
the overtones talk too, the partials,
and all the physics of speech
begins — dozens of words
that scurry outwards from
the word apparent,
the word the speaker means

but what is intention worth
in a physical world?
is there a word that breaks
open like a milkweed pod
and scatters airborne seed
inward rather,
deep into the hearing itself
so one word is many and is yours?

8 September 2013

CLOUDS

not just relief from the sun's brightness —

polarized light is itself a healing,

calming, reminding.

A cloud lets you think.

All great inventions

come from rainy countries.

The cloud

is the coating of the mind.

8 September 2013

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**Night is one long
continuous voyage**

**each day a different
port of call.**

8 September 2013

SISTE VIATOR

**It said in my head
again what it said
sixty years
ago and I did.**

2.

Traveler stay home
**is what it meant, in my best
medal-winning schoolboy Latin,
we are proud
of the words in our mouths,
but do we really pay for them,
for the pride,
pay dearly for what we've won,
for what has escaped our grasp.**

3.

**Years ago I flew on a plane
from somewhere to Phoenix, Arizona.
On the plane was Bob Hope
the famous comedian, he walked
up and down the aisles smiling,
a transparent enthusiast, delighted
to bring delight to others,
a kind of saint, I thought,**

eager to make people happy,
 a saint of the Cowper Powys mold,
 or smiling Francis.

When we got out of the plane
 the first thing I saw on the runway
 was a Gila monster watching me
 and it cracked me up,
 I thought it was part of his routine.

I think of Hope now I think
 because he wrote a funny
 book I never read
 about his travels: *I never*
left home. A better
 translation of my Latin

4.

There, you wanted an anecdote
 to fix the sentiment in mind.
Exemplum as the moralists
 of what we call the middle
 ages (they called themselves
 we of modern times)
 called telling little stories
 exhibiting virtues and vices
 in operation. So there is
 my Gila monster story

with famous comedian

for what it's worth.

Laugh at me.

Everything makes us live longer.

I never went back to Phoenix, Arizona.

9 September 2013

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**Let the tongue
stay home
in its nice bower
moist and shady
well-guarded by teeth,
let it sleep.**

**Keep the peace
by keeping still.
I have a little agate
I keep it in my pocket
it says *Tais-toi*
when I look at it.
We all need
a pebble or two
to remind us of
the long silence of stone.**

9 September 2013

DAWN

**The light is almost up now,
gives color slowly to the pink rose
that all this while has been
just a curl of darkness in the dark.**

9 September 2013

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**I wonder about these things
how close we have to be
to the rising Sun
to understand
where night is coming from.**

**There are so many places
where night was.
And where it took us
also, tripping through the curious mazes
between what we remember
and what we desire —**

**sometimes I want to recover
a past I never had,
sometimes I want to imagine
something I never imagined before,
something dawn-like,
something on the other side of dawn
that isn't day,
that isn't anything I know how to say.**

9 September 2013

SCRAPS FROM STRAVINSKY

But own the sound of none.

**Or not. The down drone
of what is not known.**

**Need it. A unit
of what is certainly known.**

**]Example: the earth moves
around the sun.]**

**What shall we call
something as sure as that?**

**A gnoeme? It should be
what is not lost in poetry.**

But what is found?

**If you dream the deeps
the surface will be known.**

**The future is built
into the surfaces of things.**

**Read the gleam
of sunlight on the skin.**

**Where the great poem sleeps,
waiting to be new.**

9 September 2013

[hearing Stravinsky and Lourié last month]

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Always from quiet beginnings,
Shakespeare idling by the Avon pool
praying no one would come along,
not even pretty women or young men,
no one for whom his mind
must make his tongue find words,
those imagined words that real people
are saying in your head while they
smiling pass you by, to waters
of their own, leaving you alone
to make up all they'll do and say
and how you'll have to answer them.

9 September 2013

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But did I know you—
then we were talking
of course the bar, I was
not drinking — who

do you think you
are? You said
to come close-lipped
to a fountain

or something like that
I alluded to my kidneys
and some doctor
years ago when men

still drank cocktails
remember? You didn't.
You had your own
idea of human organs

how they work or don't
and you said Listen
Tiger, have a drink
or take me home.

10 September 2013

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**The opera of the faraway
like a Victorian children's book
I hear voices inside the word
of old adventurers, their lions,
glaciers, killer whales,
the green of Shalimar
blood-spattered as with roses,
the opera of all we never knew
here in our trembling hands.**

10 September 2013

A SONG OF MISREADING

I know you I want to know you
better I want the btter
salt of your regrets to squeeze
out of your pores into the poor
mouth, this stammering oracle
of almost love.

I need you
I need to need you or else
I stand alone every square
foot I stand on the Arctic pole,
everywhere I go I have to step
away from the center,
you are the center
I can transfer it it all there
eager molecules of my seeming
soft between your hands, I also
have a hand in it,
alone together on a desert will.

2.

Deep in the low of hello
there is a church downtown
beloved of seminarians
where on the walls around

the altar Christ has written
I am the Lambda and Omega.

. We get our desires —
these are called the next life.
Heaven is here and hell
and the clamorous opera
of in between only high
churchmen believe in
but most of us wind up going to.

3.
So that day I was Dante
and slept alone. A girl
on Eighth Avenue gave me pause
flexed her skirt against a thigh
as if a million years had
suddenly passed and all this
nothing but geology and she
laughed among her friends
but not at me. I was part
of her climate, our shared poetry.

10 September 2013

SHEER

Song

**Aladdin's answers
to the law
of finders,
cave
is anything
you can go in,
hide,
a song
is anything you sing.**

2.

**But what of a song
made up of songs,
is it one or many
as the Gentiles worried
about the world around them
the worlds they could only
see but we can sing?**

3.

**Sheerly what it is
and not another,
a song impersonates itself
in every weather.**

**A song never loud
because it is music
not the muscles sing.**

4.

**Solomon put them in a book,
Solomon someone, King of time.
He had one day
and the thousand nights.
For every song we sing
one night is added to our lives
until the music runs out
and the song has to find
another mouth.
Meanwhile you go on meaning
what you think you mean
but it is the song that means
only to go on.**

11 September 2013

